

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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## **FOR GREAT HORNED OWLS, SPRING HAS ARRIVED**

By Lowell Washburn  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Many of the birds that will nest and rear their young in Iowa backyards this summer are still many hundreds or even thousands of miles to the south, soaking up sunshine and warmth in central or South America.

But there is one dramatic exception. For resident great horned owls, the spring nesting season is currently in full swing. Of all Iowa bird species, horned owls are the earliest to initiate nesting each year. For most pairs, the noisy courtship displays that began in December have nearly concluded. Some females are even setting on eggs, and the first downy chicks will appear next month.

No avian mother is more dedicated. While sitting atop her clutch of two to three eggs, the brooding female endures a solid month of ice, sub-zero wind chills, and may even become covered in several inches of new snow. Regardless of how severe the weather becomes, the female sits tight. To leave the nest would doom eggs to freezing.

During the next two months, the male will be a complete support system for his mate and newly hatched chicks. Great horned males are fierce hunters and will take on virtually anything that flies, hops, or crawls. Rodents and cottontails are the most common fare. More bizarre menu items include crows, cats, and striped skunks. In spite

of the fact that late winter supplies of prey items are at low ebb, the family rarely misses a meal.

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## **DNR EXTENDS DEADLINE TO REMOVE ICE FISHING SHELTERS**

DES MOINES – Due to favorable ice conditions over most of the state, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has pushed back the deadline for removing permanent ice fishing shelters from public waters to March 1. The usual deadline is February 20.

Ice shelter owners should be aware that weather and ice conditions can change and they should be prepared to remove the permanent ice shacks from the ice, if a period of unseasonably warm weather develops.

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## **ACCUMULATING SNOW CAN WEAKEN ICE**

MANCHESTER – The weight of drifting snow may cause unsafe ice conditions on parts of Iowa lakes, and anglers should avoid walking or driving through or near these drifts.

“We had an angler break through the ice at Backbone Lake recently simply by walking through a large snow drift,” said Mick Klemesrud, with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “Fortunately they were only in four feet of water and were quickly out of the lake.”

Most Iowa lakes are under a fairly thick sheet of ice, but also a heavy blanket of snow.

“Anyone who has shoveled snow can attest that snow can be heavy,” Klemesrud said. “You can see the weight the snow is putting on the ice when you cut a hole and the water rushes up. That’s a lot of stress.”

Snow also acts as insulation and can either prevent ice growth during cold weather or preserve ice thickness during warm ups. Ice thickness is not uniform on any body of water and anglers should avoid crossing the snow drifts or discolored ice.

“One of the tips we tell anglers is to trust your instincts. We never say it is safe to go on the ice because there is a risk with ice fishing or other activities on the ice,” he said.

**For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.**

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## **DNR OFFERS RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS OPPORTUNITIES**

DES MOINES - In celebration of National Random Acts of Kindness Week (Feb. 11 to 17), Keepers of the Land, the volunteer program with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), offers many statewide opportunities for Iowans to offer kind acts to our natural resources.

- **Prairie Greenhouse Event Opportunity:** Officials at the Prairie Resource Center, in Lehigh, are seeking volunteers to assist with transplanting prairie wildflowers at an event on Feb. 27 from 6 to 8 p.m. Volunteers will also be treated to a tour of the new center and a slide show of Iowa's prairies. For more information contact Scott Frieden at 515-543-8319.
- **Youth Shooting Sports Event Opportunity:** Officials with the Shooting Sports Program are seeking volunteers to assist with the State Youth Indoor Archery Shoot in Des Moines on March 1 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Volunteers are needed for registration, calling arrows, scorekeeping, and running score sheets. Training will be provided. For more information contact Ben Berka at 515-281-0140.
- **Slide Restocking Opportunity:** Officials with the Iowa Outdoors magazine at the Wallace State Office Building, in Des Moines, are seeking volunteers to assist with managing magazine photo files by restocking slides to their correct storage binders. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Brian Button at 515-281-0716.
- **Frog and Toad Surveying Opportunity:** Officials with the Wildlife Diversity Program are preparing for volunteers to help with frog and toad surveys that will begin in the spring by offering pre-requisite training workshops throughout the state during March. Trainings will be held March 1, in Ruthven, March 15, in Center Junction, and March 29, in Maxwell. For more information contact Stephanie Shepherd at 515-432-2823 ext. 102.
- **Storm Damage Cleanup Opportunity:** Officials at Lake Darling State Park, in Brighton, are seeking volunteers to assist with cleaning up storm-damaged trees and limbs. Volunteers experienced with chain saw operation and driving a tractor are also needed. This opportunity is available immediately and is ongoing pending project completion. For more information contact Jeff Hildebrand or Merrill Lucas at 319-694-2323.

A full listing of volunteer opportunities and events is available at [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org).

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or [Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov)

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## *Iowa Fishing Report*

[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

February 12, 2008

Ice fishing reports are issued every other week while quality ice conditions exist. For current information on ice fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

### Northeast

**Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15:** Ice conditions remain solid with 18 to 24 inches of ice in most areas. The DNR ramp in Guttenberg remains iced in and, due to the ice pack, open water fishing for walleye is not recommended at this time. Anglers can call the DNR Guttenberg office for ice conditions if the weather improves. In Pool 10, **Bussey Lake** has been slow to good in the late morning and afternoon for bluegills. Anglers have had mixed results in the **Sny Magill** area with slow to good fishing for bluegills and some nice crappies at the lower ends of backwaters next to **Wyalusing Slough**. Near Harpers Ferry, **Joyce Lake** is slow to good fishing with a mixed bag of bluegill and crappie. In Pool 11, some nice yellow perch are still being caught **Sunfish Lake**, although the bite has slowed.

In **Pools 12 and 13**, crappie and bluegill fishing has been fair to poor depending on the day. The best times have been the first and last hours of the day. Thick ice and heavy snow has caused dissolved oxygen to deplete in many of the shallow backwaters. As oxygen levels in a backwater drop, fish move towards the mouth or entrance where oxygen levels are generally higher. **Brown's Lake/Lanesville Slough** area has been producing some fish and has good oxygen levels. Other areas to try are **Tippy, Fishtrap**, and **Grass Lake** (Kehough Slough) in Pool 12 and **lower Sabula Lake** in Pool 13.

**Sweet Marsh**, aka Marten's Lake (Bremer): Crappies are biting jigs tipped with a wax worm or minnow.

Fish have been caught in **George Wyth Lake, Big Woods Lake, South Prairie Lake, Meyer Lake** and **Casey Lake**, all in Black Hawk County.

**Brinker Lake** (Black Hawk): Fishing has been good for crappie, bluegill and channel catfish with the most action in the early morning and before sundown. Channel catfish have been caught suspended so try jigging well off of the bottom.

**Avenue of the Saints Lake** (Bremer): Fishing is good for crappies and bluegills. The fish are abundant, but are on the small side.

**Lake Delhi** (Delaware): Bluegills and crappies are good. Delhi has a consistent bite when other lakes are slow.

**Lake Meyer** (Winneshek): Fishing has slowed but the best time to fish continues to be early morning and late afternoon.

**Hendricks Lake** (Howard): Fishing has slowed quite a bit. The best chance here seems to be early morning.

**Volga Lake** (Fayette): Fishing has been slow.

**Trout** streams are open, accessible and fishable.

**For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.**

### **Southeast**

**Mississippi River Pools 16 to 20:** Tailwater stage in **Pool 16** is at 6.13 feet and is forecasted to stay fairly stable over the next week. As of last week, walleyes and saugers were being caught below **Lock and Dam 15** and in deeper holes of the main channel. Most anglers are using jigs tipped with larger minnows and some night crawlers are being used. With colder temperatures this week the Marquette Ramp in Davenport may freeze in again. There were some reports of crappies being caught through the ice along the Harbor Road and up by **Rock Creek** (Pool 15) on wax worms.

In **Pool 17**, tailwater stage is at 4.63 feet and is forecasted to fall slowly over the next week. Currently, the boat ramp in Muscatine is frozen in and the ramp and parking area remain unplowed. Ice fishing for crappies and bluegills is fair in the backwaters.

In **Pool 18**, tailwater stage has fallen close to a foot over the weekend to 6.02 feet. River stage is forecasted to keep falling slowly over the next week. This past weekend, the Toolesboro ramp was open, but colder temperatures may change that. Anglers were catching some walleyes and sauger below the dam on jig/minnow combinations and on night crawlers. Anglers should find out a head of time if the boat ramp is accessible before planning a fishing trip.

In **Pool 19**, tailwater stage has fallen to 3.55 feet and is expected to stay fairly stable throughout the week. No fishing report. In **Pool 20**, tailwater stage is at 4.53 feet. Tailwater stage is fluctuating daily due to dam releases. No fishing report.

**Lake Darling** (Washington): Very little ice fishing activity on the lake last week. There is about 8 inches of hard snow on top of eight inches of ice. Anglers had been picking up some nice crappies and bluegills out around the cedar trees in the idle of the lake before last week's snow storm.

**Lake Belva Deer** (Keokuk): There is more than a foot of snow on the ice and a few anglers back out last Friday. Crappies were being caught a couple of feet off the bottom in water anywhere from 11 to 25 feet deep.

**Lake Rathbun** (Appanoose): Crappie fishing has picked up a little with anglers having some success in Buck Creek and Honey Creek. Most crappies being caught are around some type of underwater structure and are hitting on jigs tipped with a wax worm or a minnow.

**Lake Sugema** (Van Buren): Crappies and bluegills have been hitting on jigs tipped with wax worms. Try a variety of depths. There is some open water in the main lake area so use caution.

**Lake Wapello** (Davis): Bluegills have been biting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm or a minnow. Fish any underwater structure for the best success.

**Lake Keomah** (Mahaska): Bluegills have been hitting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm. Try a variety of depths and look for areas with some underwater habitat.

**Lake Macbride** (Johnson): Bluegills are always plentiful here, however, they lack in size. They are around almost any type of structure and can be caught on small jigs/wax worms. Crappies have been fairly willing to bite as well. Fish over deeper brush or rock with small jigs or spoons tipped with wax worms. Be prepared to sort through 8 to 9-inch crappies while looking for the larger fish.

**Diamond Lake** (Poweshiek): Bluegills are biting here on jigs/wax worms fished over brush or pallet structures. The deeper structures may produce some crappies as well, especially towards dark. Remember, no minnows allowed here.

**Kent Park Lake** (Johnson): Bluegills are being caught in and around the deep brush early and late in the day.

**Union Grove Lake** (Tama): Anglers are catching good numbers of average sized bluegills on jigs/wax worms fishing around the deeper brush. A few crappies are also being taken, especially at dawn/dusk. There is an aerator in use at the dam end of the lake so use caution in that area.

**For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.**

### **Southwest**

**Big Creek** (Polk): Crappies are being caught fishing small jigs tipped with a minnow or wax worm in 30 feet of water and the best bite is from dusk on. Bluegills up to 9 inches are being caught fishing over the cedar tree piles or other structure on small jigs tipped with a wax worm. A few walleyes are being caught fishing with a minnows.

**Hickory Grove** (Story): Bluegills up to 8 inches are being caught fishing near structure using small jigs tipped with a wax worm.

**Don Williams** (Story): Bluegills are being caught fishing near structure during the day using small jigs tipped with a wax worm. Crappies up to 13 inches are being caught fishing around dusk.

**Ahquabi** (Warren): Bluegills up to 10 inches and a few Redears are being caught fish structure during the day.

**Rock Creek** (Jasper): Crappies are being caught fishing structure at dusk. Bluegills are being caught fish during the day using small jigs tipped with a wax worm.

**CONTACT: Ben Dodd (515) 432-2823, Ext.108, for information on the ABOVE area lakes.**

**Fogle Lake** (Ringgold): Ice conditions are good. A few bluegills and crappies are being caught in deeper water near structure with wax worms and minnows. Midday seems to be better for bluegill with mornings and evenings a little better for crappie.

**Lake of Three Fires** (Taylor): Ice conditions are good. Several nice bluegills are being caught with wax worms over the tree pile 100 yards north of the center of the dam. Crappies can be caught using minnows suspended near the tree piles or along the old creek channel.

**Icaria** (Adams): Ice conditions are good. A few nice bluegills and crappies are being caught with wax worms and minnows. Some walleye activity has centered on the old road bed that crosses the main arm.

**Three Mile Lake** (Union): Ice conditions are good. Good numbers of bluegills are being caught next to deep structure on wax worms. Crappies seem to be harder to find, but a few crappies are also being caught next to deep structure. Some perch have been caught near the pump house point.

**Twelve Mile Lake** (Union): Ice conditions are good. Nice sized bluegills are being caught with wax worms on the 15 to 18 foot flats or from the sides of the old road beds. Some walleye have been picked up on the old road beds.

**Farm ponds** have had variable reports.

**CONTACT: Gary Sobotka (641)464-3108 for information on the ABOVE area lakes.**

Ice conditions have been reported as good with area lakes having 12 to 15 inches.

**Nodaway Lake** (Adair): Anglers reported bluegill fishing was fair with fish averaging 7 inches. A few crappies are being caught using minnows in the afternoon.

**Mormon Trail** (Adair): Bluegills and crappies are slow with a few being caught around sunken cedar trees.

**Greenfield Lake** (Adair): Bluegill and crappie have been slow. Try small jigs tipped with wax worms or minnows around deep structure.

**Meadow Lake** (Adair): Bluegills are fair around deep structure. Crappies are slow.

**Anita** (Cass): Bluegills have been fair with 7 to 8-inch fish being reported.

**Manawa** (Pottawattamie): Fishing is good for 9 to 12-inch crappies on jigs and minnows. A few walleyes are being caught on larger minnows on the south side of the lake. Manawa has 8 to 11 inches of ice.

**Willow Lake** (Harrison): Bluegills are slow for 8-inch fish using wax worms.

**Anderson Area** (Montgomery): Bluegills are slow with reports of 8-inch fish being caught on teardrops tipped with a wax worm. Crappies have been fair on the north pond using minnows.

**Southwest Iowa Farm Ponds:** The best fishing reports have been from privately owned small ponds for bluegill and in the larger ponds, crappie, using teardrops tipped with wax worm. Ice thickness is 15 inches.

**CONTACT: Bryan Hayes (712)769-2587 for information on the ABOVE area lakes.**

**For more information on general fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.**

### **Northwest**

**Walleye season closes on West Okoboji, East Okoboji and Spirit lakes in Dickinson County beginning Feb. 15. It will re-open on May 2.**

**Spirit Lake** (Dickinson): Walleye fishing has been good out from the Foot Bridge in 10 to 15 feet of water using jigging minnow style baits and minnows. Bluegills are fair on the Grade and in Trickle Slough. Anglers are catching a few crappies are being caught in Trickle Slough

**West Okoboji Lake** (Dickinson): Bluegill fishing is fair off Pocahontas Point, Millers Bay and the North Bay using wax worms. A few yellow perch are being caught in

Emerson Bay. Walleye fishing is sporadic the North Bay, Smith's Bay, Millers Bay and Emerson Bay have all produced fish in the last week 15-25 feet of water has been the most productive.

**Tuttle Lake** (Emmett): Walleye fishing is fair on the north end using minnows.

**Crawford Creek** (Ida): Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair. Early morning and late afternoon is the best times.

**Storm Lake** (Buena Vista): Fishing is fair for walleyes on live minnows under a bobber.

**Brushy Creek** (Webster): Some nice crappies have been caught throughout the lake; most have been caught on a small jig and minnow. Bluegills are right off bottom. Try a small tear drop with a wax worm.

**Clear Lake** (Cerro Gordo): Ice depths are running 24 to 27 inches. Walleye fishing has been fair, with the best action at the sunrise and sunset periods fishing in the central portion of the lake between the Island and Dodge's Point and over to the north shore. Minnows and jigging spoons are the best techniques. Remember Clear Lake has a 14-inch minimum length on walleye with only one of the fish over 22 inches and a daily limit of three. Many walleyes below the 14-inch minimum are being caught. Yellow bass are hitting especially at the sunrise and sunset periods on small jigging spoons tipped with minnow heads. The Island area is the best spot for yellow bass.

**Blue Pit –Lester Milligan Park** (Cerro Gordo): Trout were stocked for the third time into big Blue on Jan. 24, and good numbers of fish are available. Small jigging spoons tipped with wax worms or the prepared trout baits are working the best.

**Beeds Lake** (Franklin): Crappies and bluegills are hitting, but sorting is required for acceptable size fish. Small ice jigs tipped with minnows or wax worms work the best.

**For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.**

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